

Meningococcal Disease

Meningococcal disease includes a variety of serious infections, including meningitis (infection of the covering of the spinal cord and brain), bacteremia (bacteria in the blood), pneumonia (infection of the lungs), and arthritis (swelling of the joints). Children and young adults are most often affected by this disease. Meningococcal disease is a medical emergency they requires prompt treatment.

CAUSE: *Neisseria meningitidis* bacteria

SYMPTOMS: Bacteremia: Sudden onset of fever, chills, tiredness, sometimes a rash.

Meningitis: Fever, vomiting, headache, stiff neck, extreme sleepiness, confusion, irritability, lack of appetite, sometimes a rash or seizures.

TRANSMISSION: Through secretions of the nose and throat (e.g., coughing, sneezing); more common in households, child care settings, or other settings where there is close, prolonged physical contact. People can carry the bacteria in their noses and throats and not have symptoms. They can spread the disease as well as those who are ill.

INCUBATION: It takes 2 to 10 days, usually 3 to 4 days, from the time a person is exposed to the bacteria until symptoms occur.

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD: Until 24 hours after effective treatment begins.



EXCLUSION

Until child has been treated and is well enough to participate in normal daily activities.



REPORTABLE

PROVIDER: This disease is reportable to the health department. In Hall, Hamilton, or Merrick County call (308) 385-5175. Outside counties call your local or state health department

SCHOOL/CHILD CARE FACILITY: Report all confirmed cases or suspected cases.

PARENTS/GUARDIANS: Inform you child care provider if your child has this illness.

Prevention & Control

1. Household, child care facility, and preschool contacts should receive antibiotic prophylaxis as soon as possible, preferably within 24 hours of diagnosis of a case.
2. People who have been exposed should see a physician immediately.
3. Treatment: Meningococcal disease is caused by bacteria and it can be treated with antibiotics. If left untreated, it is often fatal.
4. A vaccine is available to protect against some strains of meningococcal disease.

For more information, you or your physician may call the Central District Health Department at 385-5175, or your local health department.